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on

Cholera Infantum.

By

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On Cholera Infantum.

When we reflect that it has not been ordained by Divine Providence that Man shall live free from disease, that daily manifestations convince us of the sorrowful state to which affliction can reduce us, with all the solicitude and commiseration of attending relations and friends, we are naturally led to inquire, in what can man excel more than in ministering to the sick, whereby he smooths the pillow of painful confinement, and rescues from premature death, him who seeks to live yet longer? No higher trust is committed to man than the execution of those duties which devolve on him, who presumes to conduct Disease to a favourable termination. His care and attention should be commensurate with the interest felt, and prudence exercised in his own self preservation; each case should be considered as his own.

It is necessary then to have some idea of the object to be combatted, or in what Disease consists. We

Stomach being the matchless throne of the system,
lying exposed from its relative situation to impressions
from Miasma, Contagion, and poisons of all
descriptions, we are unavoidably led to conclude
that it is the part chiefly concerned in numerous
diseases. Yet we are restricted from believing that
diseased action begins here alone: the whole surface
of the primæ via, the region of smell, and, though
indeterminate, we will include the Lungs, are parts
through the medium of which diseased impression is
extended to the system. Having considered the
Stomach as a point from which diseased action
is frequently extended, I am induced to believe that
it is the chief seat of Cholera Infantum, for no
disease exhibits more of a gastric nature than those
cases which occurred within my observations in Virginia
during the month of July 1835. Approaching often as
a common Diarrhœa, the popular remark is, that
the child has disordered bowels, the concomitant
of this frequently proves in a short time to be a

4

vomiting of bile, and of whatever is swallowed. This discharge of bile is in most cases preceded by retchings and efforts of the stomach, by which only a thin or watery matter is thrown up. There are exacerbations of the disease in the evening; the brain is affected as shown by delirium and febrony; the pulse becomes small, quick, and throbbed; there is intolerable thirst, shrunk and languid eyes, sharp nose, cold extremities, with great heat of the head and bowels. The smell of the discharge is somewhat peculiar, for I do not know that it occurs in many other diseases, save dysentery; it is that of water in which meat has been washed. The skin on the forehead becomes tight, the lips shrivelled or contracted, and, at the approach of death, the belly turned, with an increase of debility, though decrease in the severity of the symptoms. The disease may continue from three to fifteen days.

With respect to the Diagnosis of Cholera it may resemble the disease arising from Dentition. A

5

Prognosis becomes embarrassing, since death may sometimes take place very unexpectedly, so may recoveries on the contrary, when every thing seemed to portend evil. Upon the pulse becoming fuller, slower, and more natural, with dark bilious alvine discharges, we may anticipate a favourable result. Among the symptoms which denote danger are, the cold damp surface, lank countenance, ineffectual vomiting, nervous insensibility, half closed state of the eyes, the patient muttering or grumbling to himself.

Among the foregoing disclosing causes of Cholera we may consider the impurity of the air in large cities, for it has been observed that the disease does not occur so frequently in villages or country situations; the exciting causes are abundant, such as, improper clothing, food, teething, sudden changes in the atmosphere from heat to cold, or from dryness to humidity. The disease occurs generally at a season of

the year when fruits are plentiful, we may then justly include the improper use of them among the causes of this very intractable disease. It is evidently of gastric origin, soon however involving the hepatic apparatus, hence an increased flow of bile.

Johnson in writing on the Cholera of India, gives it as his decided opinion that it is a disease arising from a diminution, if not a total suppression of the biliary secretion. The derivation of the word Cholera implies a flowing of bile, and Dr. Johnson strenuously maintains that this circumstance is a salutary effect, and not by any means a cause of the disease, if so he says we should observe bile amongst the first discharges from the Intestines and Stomach. I cannot for my part distinguish between Cholera Morbus of Children and Cholera Infantum. In the application of Fever, we nowhere meet with the terms Febris Adulorum and Febris Infantum; hence conclude that the Cholera of grown persons must be of the same nature with

the disease under consideration, as many of the most prominent symptoms are alike, and although the causes may not be precisely the same, debauches in eating and drinking too frequently make up the number. In Dysentery we are taught to believe that two functions are materially involved, the functions of the skin and Liver, and that a correction of these insures health: it seems reasonable from the analogy of the two diseases to suppose that similar functions are involved, and that checked perspiration acting on the principle of reversed sympathy may serve as a remote cause in bringing about that state of things observed in *Chilera Infantum*.

Post mortem researches have shown in protracted cases, appearances of drofical effusions, dark Liver, and spots over the Intestines, principally the Duodenum, with extremely diminished caliber of this Intestine, and this next in the order of descent: the ~~colon~~ has been discovered extremely enlarged.

occupying nearly half the belly, the gall bladder
filled with dark or green bile. There is generally
more or less of serous effusion found in the ventricles
of the brain, and under the (Pachnoid) membrane.
Cases which have terminated in the early stage
show congestions of the brain, and those which were
protracted, most usually present effusions, the
terminations being in convulsions and Hydrocephalus.
Treatment of Cholera Infantum—When the case
is mild, or attended with slight vomiting, the
treatment may consist in favouring natural
indications, such as promoting the discharges
from the bowels by the use of Castor oil, which
may possibly shield the surface of the intestines
from aconitum, and tend to restore natural
stools. Diluent drinks especially those containing
animal gelatin, as chicken or real water, prove
highly useful. Though mild cases may occur
I have not seen them, but one case of a violent
nature came within my knowledge. The irritability

of Stomach was too great for the retention of any article, whether medicinal or nutritive. The vomitings were at times bilious, also the discharges from the bowels. That almost unerring peculiarity in the smell of the farces was not observed in this case. The attention of the physicians was first called to allay the violent and frequent efforts of the Stomach; in this he was baffled, for after an administration of the most approved antiemetic medicines, such as lime water and mild, strong coffee without cream or sugar, mint tea &c, the vomiting continued, and the case proved fatal. The chicken water, neutral mixture, enodyne enemata, warm bath and fomentations were not employed, for reasons, if any, which were not assigned. The Warm bath, from its divided effects in allaying irritation in the system, and diverting fluids to the surface, is a valuable remedial means. Salomel and Opium in small quantities, as $\frac{1}{4}$ or $\frac{1}{2}$ of the former to $\frac{1}{8}$ of the latter, are employed.

often with the most beneficial result. It is the
practice of some eminent physicians to employ
an Emetic, as Specuanum, in the first stage:
this however, would not answer when great prostration
exists. Other articles of treatment are, infusion of
Togewood, which I have learned is often employed
by Dr. Physick, infusion of the Strawberry or Blackberry
root, alum with Opium, Saccharum saturni,
Verbinthinated preparations as fitters' roses.
all these means have been employed to
advantage, yet it must be very evident that
proper discrimination should be exercised with
regard to the time of administration. In a case
attended with bilious discharges from the Stomach
and by stool, we should not begin with Astringents,
but delay their application until the Stomach
has been purified, by an Emetic, and the stools
have been rendered natural from the use of
Cathartics, and I know of none better than those
of the mercurial kind. Along with Venenum

in Cholera Infantum, Verminia is a frequent attendant; now the combination of Calomel and Opium answers a twofold indication. The Stomach and Hepatic & Splanchnic apparatus becomes deeply involved in this disease, and until the biliary excretion becomes properly restored we must in vain expect a cure.

I have been informed by Dr. W. M. Long of Pa. that in this disease which was extremely prevalent in the County of his residence, in July last, he adopted a course of practice altogether bold, and was led to this from his theoretical notions of its seat, and the incompetency of his former mode of treatment, yet it corresponds so well with the ideas of Dr. Weston that I must think his speculative notions were, in some degree, derived from that source. Dr. Long exhibited Calomel freely, after having quieted gastric irritation carrying it off with Castor oil. This treatment he would pursue until the forces assumed a natural

appearance, the discharges he observed were often serous, and so soon as they assumed a healthy aspect, he felt no further anxiety, a recovery being almost certain. In one case he successfully used 30 grs. of Calomel and 27 tea-spoonfuls of Castor oil in 48 hours, the patient being a child about one year of age. Of such a bold course of treatment it should certainly feel some apprehension, yet this gentleman deserved great confidence in his practice; and his success had emboldened him in a continuance of it.

When we have evidence of a congested state of the vessels of the brain we shall answer an important end by topical bleeding, detaching blood freely by cupping or otherwise. Blisters in most cases of Cholera Infantum are also important remedies, serving the purpose for which they are usually employed, to wit, in inducing relaxation and counter irritation. Spasmodic contraction of the intestine is the source of pain in colic, torments is a grating, and intolerable (I judge).



to the same cause; if so, blisters are well adapted to take off tension, and induce relaxation. This idea may be supported from the peculiar advantage derived from blisters in Hydrocephaly, for we are required to put great dependence on them in formidable cases of this disease. The powdered leaves of the *Barbophyllum Aromaticum*, being first quilled in flame and wrung out of hot hand, applied to the Stomach and Abdomen, have proved useful in Cholera, on the principle of revulsion. The oil of *Juniperus*, administered at the period immediately preceding the accession of yangrene, is a remedy of established efficacy.

When the disease has proved tractable and the patient has arrived at that state which may be termed convalescent, great care and attention are required in the employment of diet and regimen in general. Breast milk at first, solution of *Gum Arabic*, mint tea, balm tea, marshmallow tea, and burnt bread water are proper. These



may be varied as circumstances require, advancing to stronger articles if great debility exists. The flannel roller is frequently used to advantage when there is great relaxation of the abdominal muscles; it adds comfort and support to the little patient. Change of air is attended with the most salutary consequences, for this purpose, as soon as his strength will admit, he should be carried abroad, since nothing tends more towards a complete recovery.

If mothers would observe rules of the following kind, it is probable the disease would be of less frequent occurrence. 1st Never permit a child to be weaned within the first year of his age. 2nd The cold bath should be used daily, if the infant possess a good constitution, early in the morning, 20 or 30 minutes after it is taken out of bed. 3rd Keep the child well clothed, using flannel and yarn stockings. 4th An excess in the use of all kinds of fruits should be

voided, the proper diet at first being milk, then a moderate quantity of animal food. 5th In all cases of Nutrition, if swelling of the gums exists, lance down to the tooth through the gum. *Cholera Infantum* may upon the whole, be considered as bordering upon the *Opprobria Medicorum*, for, indeed, its mortality was astonishing in Petersburg Va. during July last, and, in this town, it is well known that some of the most eminent medical men in the State reside. From the rapid march of the disease in some cases, and from the unbounded prostration early manifested in others, together with the circumstance that the unfortunate victim of disease is frequently one of too tender years to designate the nature of his sufferings, or to support long a severe attack, we well estimate the danger in every instance. The physician then should be ever prompt to relieve suffering humanity, and while he

is quick to discern in the choice of expedients, should
acquit himself with deserved credit, remembering
that in so doing, the rewards of a higher judge
than those of man await him.

